

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ROME 07171 161740Z

15

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

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R 161624Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1139

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 7171

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GR, VT, XF

SUBJECT: GREEK FOREIGN MINISTER CALLS ON POPE PAUL

1. RANKING VATICAN SOURCE INFORMED US THAT VATICAN CONSIDERS GREEK PRIME MINISTER KISSOTIS'S PRIVATE AUDIENCE WITH POPE PAUL ON MAY 10 AS A SIGNIFICANT BREAKTHROUGH IN VATICAN-GREEK RELATIONS WHICH HERETOFORE HAVE BEEN RATHER COOL. GREEK EMBASSY IN ROME HAS BEEN ONE OF FEW MISSIONS OF THOSE COUNTRIES NOT HAVING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH HOLY SEE WHICH HAS SHOWN VIRTUALLY NO INTEREST IN FOLLOWING VATICAN AFFAIRS. LIKEWISE, GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH HAS TAKEN LESS INTEREST IN ECUMENICAL RELATIONS WITH ROMAN CATHOLICS THAN HAVE OTHER ORTHODOX CHURCHES, INCLUDING ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH AT ISTANBUL. EXCEPT FOR ARRANGING AUDIENCE BETWEEN POPE JOHN AND GREEK ROYAL FAMILY AND ABORTED VISIT OF FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER AVRAFIOTIS, SOURCE ASSERTED, THERE HAVE BEEN NO SIGNIFICANT CONTACTS BETWEEN GOG AND HOLY SEE.

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PAGE 02 ROME 07171 161740Z

2. IT WAS AGREED WITH KISSOTIS THAT THERE WILL NOW BE SOME

INFORMAL CONTACT BETWEEN GREEK EMBASSY IN ROME AND VATICAN. BITSIOS TOLD POPE HE WAS PRIMARILY INTERESTED IN USING THESE CONTACTS TO DISCUSS FUTURE OF JERUSALEM AND HOLY PLACES. HE DID NOTE TO POPE PAUL THAT GREECE WAS NOT SANGUINE ABOUT THE ADVISABILITY OF INTERNATIONALIZATION, TO WHICH POPE REPEATED HIS WELL-KNOWN POSITION THAT SOME SORT OF INTERNATIONALLY GUARANTEED SPECIAL STATUTE WOULD BE NECESSARY AS JERUSALEM'S SPECIAL CHARACTER AS THE HOLY SITE OF THREE MAJOR RELIGIONS COULD NOT EASILY BE GUARANTEED UNDER THE RESTRICTED CONTROL OF ONE POWER.

3. GOOD PORTION OF DISCUSSIONS WERE TAKEN UP BY BITSIOS WHO PRESENTED WELL-KNOWN GOG POSITION ON CYPRUS. HE TOLD POPE HE LOOKED FORWARD TO MEETING THE FOLLOWING WEEK IN ROME WITH HIS TURKISH COUNTERPART AND HAD HOPES THAT WITH GOOD WILL ON BOTH SIDES A MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY SOLUTION COULD BE FOUND TO PROBLEMS OF AEGEAN SEA AND CYPRUS. VOLPE

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